

# Information on Giardia Infection (Giardiasis)



**What is Giardia?** A parasite which causes an infection of the intestines.

**What are the symptoms?** Abdominal cramps, diarrhea, gas, bloating, loss of appetite, and tiredness. Sometimes symptoms come and go. Often people don't have any symptoms.

## **How is it spread?**

Giardia is found in infected humans, dogs, cats, beavers and other animals. Giardia can be spread:

- **by contact with the feces of an infected person**
- (Example: If a person changes an infected baby's diapers and does not wash his hands thoroughly afterwards he can infect himself by putting his fingers or hands in his mouth or by handling objects or food with his contaminated hands. When he or someone puts the food or objects in their mouth they can become infected.)
- **from the feces of an infected animal**
- **by drinking water contaminated by human or animal feces** (e.g., lakes, streams, irrigation ditches)
- **by eating food contaminated with giardia.**

**How long after being infected does a person become sick?** 1 to 5 weeks; usually 7-10 days.

## **When can someone with Giardia spread it to others?**

Without treatment, infected people may pass Giardia parasites in their feces for months. A person is no longer contagious after taking a complete course of a medication prescribed by a physician.

**Who is susceptible?** Everyone.

## **How can the spread of Giardia be prevented?**

- **Thorough hand washing after using the toilet, before handling or eating food, and after**
- **Handling soiled diapers.**
- Disinfect objects in the environment, which may have been soiled with feces. For example: toilets, diaper changing tables, faucets, doorknobs, refrigerator door handles, infant toys.
- Use disposable towels for drying hands.
- Campers and backpackers should boil, chemically treat (iodine), or filter drinking water.
- Dispose of feces in a safe and sanitary way, especially avoiding contamination of lakes and streams.

## **When can a person with Giardia return to work or child care?**

- **WORK:** People with Giardia who provide care to children in child care settings, provide care to persons in health care facilities or residential care facilities, or work as a food handler, **must not work while they have diarrhea.**
- **CHILD CARE :** Children with Giardia who have diarrhea **should not attend child care until they are on medication and their symptoms stop.**

**What is the treatment for Giardia infection?** An appropriate medication prescribed by a physician.

*If you have questions, please call your doctor or local health department.*

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